

Criswell: A tough talker takes over numismatic group

By Roger Boye

WHEN THE NEW president of the American Numismatic Association (ANA) talks about himself, he says, "I've never been known to be too delicate a little fellow."

There has never been doubt about the "little fellow" part, because Grover C. Criswell of Ft. McCoy, Fla., puts 285 pounds into a 6-foot-tall frame. Now, there's no doubt about the "too delicate" part, either.

In his inaugural address as president, Criswell accused past United States Mint directors of "lacking positive, aggressive leadership" and, in short, of being numismatic numskulls.

The criticism was even more pointed because the last two mint directors were among the more than 700 persons attending the banquet at which he spoke during the annual ANA convention in Atlanta. In fact, the immediate past director, Mrs. Mary Brooks, was master of ceremonies for the banquet.

Criswell, who became ANA president late last August after running for the office unopposed, told the ANA members that coin collectors have two major requests of the U.S. Mint: Produce commemorative coins and produce gold coins. To obtain these goals, he wants collectors to "declare war" on the Treasury Department.

"If we can convince Congress to pass a law for decent coinage, Treasury will have to comply," he said in urging collectors to write congressmen in support of legislation that would authorize the minting of commemorative coins in all metals.

The Treasury Department has opposed minting commemorative coins based on its experience with them

earlier this century. As a Treasury undersecretary told a congressional committee earlier this year, commemorative coins result in confusion among the public, encourage counterfeiting, and "open the floodgate for a multitude of special coinage requests."

Toward the end of his 800-word speech, Criswell said: "The ultimate paradox is that the U.S. Treasury is supporting the distribution and sales of medals to be produced by the U.S. Mint, based on taxpayer's money and sold by a private organization for profit."

Coin World editorially deplored Criswell's taste and timing of the attack and accused him of lacking diplomacy and a breach of etiquette. The other weekly coin publication, Numismatic News, tried to straddle the issue of the speech, but did call his remarks "indicate."

Even the ANA resolutions committee got into the act by passing a resolution apologizing to just about everyone concerned for Criswell's "intemperate" remarks.

Meanwhile, the majority of letters from collectors published so far in the numismatic press have supported Criswell.

THE ANNUAL convention of the Club of Illinois Numismatists at Homewood will be from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. next Sunday at the Holiday Inn, Int. Hwy. 80 and Halsted Street, Harvey.

Sixteen dealers will be on hand to buy and sell coins, and many collector's items will be on display. One of the displays will be a complete type set of fractional currency assembled by Judson D. McCarthy, a former club president.